

## Interview with Kazimir Ladny

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Where did they take you?

Ladny: It was very, I would say, nostalgic for me that the train went northwest to my hometown where I was born. It's only about four miles from the village where I was born. We were passing that. So I thought, "Hell, where are you going now? Going to the army, I went on this train in that direction, and now I'm going this direction, where to?" At that time I didn't know that this was a train all the way to Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: Well, you have to add a few years before you got to Springfield. The train, though, as I understand, at least short-term—and this would have been very early in 1940—took you to a prison camp in northeastern Germany?

Ladny: Yeah. They put us in labor camp to work by the farmers. It was very good treatment.

DePue: I know at this location they actually allowed you to take a shower and they deloused you, correct?

Ladny: Yeah. They took us in the truck and to military barracks. We take shower. And after we got out of shower they have to scrub the walls and the floor from our building where we were staying. So they deloused us. And entirely different treatment. Entirely different system from the Communist system.

DePue: What in particular struck you about the way the Germans were running the camp versus the way the Russians did? Anything in particular stick in your mind?

Ladny: Yeah. In Russia we were getting once a day scoop of boiled water and once a day something they called soup, if they still had enough. But sometimes it was coming close. "I'm sorry, we are out." Whereas in Germany everything like clockwork in every detail, so that the food, whatever was assigned, we got it, and exactly on time. When they said, "It's going to be at seven thirty in the morning," so it was at seven thirty, not seven thirty two.

DePue: Was it enough food?

Ladny: No, it was enough to stay alive, but that is all.

DePue: Now I know that here also, this is a work camp, but the work isn't at the camp itself, is it?

Ladny: No.

DePue: So where did you end up working?

Ladny: By the farmers.

DePue: And that would be Herr Vogt, is that how you pronounce it?

Ladny: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: V-o-g-t?

Ladny: Yeah.

DePue: How did Herr Vogt and his family treat your group?

Ladny: They treated us as a guest. Really there was no sign of any enmity. And I found out later on why: Because he was [an] officer in German army in the First World War and he was prisoner of war by the Russians. So he knew what a soldier is going through.

DePue: Did you spend just the days there and went back to the camp in the evening?

Ladny: Yeah.

DePue: Did they feed you?

Ladny: Oh, they were giving good treatment. Good food. And enough. At first it was not enough. But he said, "I know that you didn't get enough food. But," he said, "I cannot afford that, because if I would give you more food, the condition you are, all of you would be sick. So," he said, "we have to take it slow. Every day a little bit more." Really, he gave us humane treatment.